

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 11 May 1999, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Nguyen Quy Binh (Viet Nam)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 823rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the second part of its 1999 session.

At the outset, I should like to express our sympathy and condolences to the Chinese Government and the families of the victims of the recent incident involving the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. On this occasion, I should like to invite you to observe a minute of silence.

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Secondly, allow me to welcome the new representatives to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Mohammed Al-Douri of Iraq and Ambassador Kálmán Petőcz of Slovakia, and assure them of our cooperation and support.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of the Russian Federation, China, Pakistan and Kenya. I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Vasily Sidorov.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian):

Mr. President, first of all I would like to welcome you to the responsible post of President of the Conference during an important period of its work, at the beginning of the second part of this year's session of the Conference. I would like to wish you every success in your endeavours to achieve progress in the activities of the Conference and to assure you of the readiness of my delegation for constructive cooperation. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to your predecessors during the current session, Ambassadors Robert Grey and Victor Rodríguez Cedeño, and also to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, his deputy Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail and all the secretariat staff for their professional and competent assistance in our work. I cordially welcome colleagues who have recently joined us. I hope to continue useful cooperation with their delegations.

My statement today is aimed at drawing the attention of the Conference to the joint Russian-Chinese press communiqué on consultations held in Moscow on 14 April of this year on issues related to the 1972 ABM Treaty. At the request of the missions of China and Russia, the text of the communiqué was issued as an official document of the Conference with the symbol CD/1584 on 29 April 1999.

Although the 1972 ABM Treaty has a small number of parties, it is difficult to overestimate its tremendous significance as a factor for strategic stability and international security. The implementation of plans for the deployment of a national anti-missile defence system would constitute a violation of a fundamental obligation under the ABM Treaty - the obligation not to deploy ABM systems for the defence of national territory - and would lead to the de facto abrogation of the treaty. Such a development would inevitably lead to the destruction of the entire system of international treaties in the disarmament field and could actually trigger a new round of the strategic arms race, including in outer space, and undermine the existing non-proliferation regime. Thus, in our view, it is not only the actual

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

parties to the ABM Treaty which have a stake in preserving it. We believe that common efforts will enable us to prevent the alarming development of the situation regarding the treaty and to avert its collapse.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep condolences to the delegation of China in connection with the death of Chinese diplomats in Belgrade as a result of the barbaric bombings by NATO. In a statement the President of the Russian Federation, B. Yeltsin, noted in this regard that "Russia is shocked at the NATO bombing of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Belgrade. There is and can be no justification for this blatantly arbitrary act." Russia firmly condemns NATO's actions against sovereign Yugoslavia which are causing increasing numbers of casualties among the civilian population, a deepening of the humanitarian crisis in the region and the undermining of the system of international relations established after the Second World War. Russia strongly calls for the immediate cessation of the NATO military action against Yugoslavia and a political settlement of the Kosovo problem. To achieve that goal, joint constructive decisions must be sought.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Li Changhe.

Mr. LI (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament began the second part of this year's session yesterday after a month's break. Today is the first meeting of the plenary after the break. The Chinese delegation highly appreciates the valuable work you conducted during the last two weeks of the first part of the session and is pleased to welcome you to continue the good work in the remaining two weeks of your presidency. My delegation will continue to offer you its full support and cooperation. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my welcome to the newly arrived ambassadors of Iraq and Slovakia. My delegation will be most pleased to cooperate with them.

Please allow me to express to you, with deep sadness and indignation, our thanks for suggesting at the start of our meeting that the Conference should express sympathy and condolences to the embassy personnel who suffered in the missile attack on the Chinese Mission to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia four days ago.

The CD began its work this year in a very complicated and unfavourable international environment. A series of developments has cast a deep shadow over the work of the CD. First, three days after the beginning of the first part of our session, a certain country announced its plan to speed up its work on a "national missile defence" and "theatre missile defence" and demanded to revise the ABM Treaty. This decision will have a profound negative influence on the global and regional strategic balance and stability, and trigger a new round of the arms race to the detriment of the international disarmament process.

(Mr. Li, China)

On 14 April, the Foreign Ministries of China and the Russian Federation issued a joint communiqué on the bilateral consultations concerning issues related to the ABM Treaty. As instructed by my Government, on 26 April the Chinese delegation to the CD, together with the Russian delegation, wrote to Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and requested that the above-mentioned communiqué be issued as an official document of the CD. The distinguished Ambassador from the Russian Federation has already made a reference to that effect.

Next, three days before the end of the first part of our session, the aerial bombardment of the sovereign State of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began. Up to now there have been 48 successive days of indiscriminate bombing, causing large-scale civilian casualties and hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing their homes. This is the biggest humanitarian disaster since the end of the cold war. The United States-led NATO must stop forthwith its military activities against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia so that the question of Kosovo can be brought back out to the paths of political settlement as early as possible.

Third, the Chinese embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was attacked by missiles last weekend, killing 3 people and wounding more than 20. The embassy building was severely damaged. All of this further worsened the situation in this region and widened the Kosovo crisis. The Chinese Government issued a solemn statement which pointed out that the gross violation of Chinese sovereignty was a rare action in diplomatic history, and had trampled the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations as well the basic norms of international relations. The Chinese Government and people expressed their utmost indignation and strong condemnation of the barbaric act. The United States-led NATO should bear all responsibility arising therefrom, and the Chinese Government reserved the right to take further action on the matter.

In the past few days, the broad masses of the Chinese people have expressed their strong opposition to power politics and hegemonism and their firm will and determination to safeguard State sovereignty at mass demonstrations and public gatherings held in various parts of China. At the same time, the barbaric bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia has also aroused strong reactions and concern around the whole world.

The bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia is an extremely grave event. The United States-led NATO must provide convincing clarifications and explanations and bear the full political, legal and financial responsibility. The Chinese Government and its people uphold justice, love peace and are ready to develop mutually beneficial and friendly cooperative relations with other countries. However, we will not tolerate any bullying or aggression, nor do we fear any threat or pressure.

On the last day of the first part of this year's CD session, Chinese President Jiang Zemin came to our plenary and made an important speech. That scene is still vivid in our memory, and his voice is still reverberating in this hall. Touching on the world reality of today, President Jiang pointed

(Mr. Li, China)

out that "the cold war mentality still lingers on and hegemonism and power politics manifest themselves from time to time. The tendency towards closer military alliance is on the rise. New forms of 'gunboat diplomacy' are rampant. Regional conflicts have cropped up one after another. ... Military Powers have not cut down their state-of-the-art weaponry. ... Under these circumstances, the question of how to advance the disarmament process and how to safeguard global security cannot but become an important and pressing task that demands the attention of all countries in the world."

He pointed out that "the old security concept based on military alliances and the build-up of armaments will not help ensure global security. Still less will it lead to a lasting world peace. This, then, requires the cultivation of a new security concept that meets the need of our times and calls for vigorous efforts to explore new ways to safeguard peace and security. ... The core of such a new concept of security should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, and other universally recognized norms governing international relations, make up the political foundations underpinning world peace. Dialogue, consultations and negotiations by parties concerned, on an equal footing, are the correct approach to solving disputes and safeguarding peace. The establishment of a new concept of security and a new just and fair international order is the only way to fundamentally promote the healthy development of the disarmament process and provide a guarantee for international peace and security."

Taking an overall view of recent developments in the international situation, one cannot but feel concern at the future development of the international situation and its negative impact on global arms control and disarmament, including the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Munir Akram.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, let me begin by first of all congratulating you on the diligence with which you have discharged your responsibilities and conducted consultations with a view to promoting early agreement on the programme of work of this Conference. We pledge to you our continued support and cooperation. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our distinguished colleagues, the Ambassadors of Iraq and Slovakia.

My delegation has listened carefully to the statements made this morning by the distinguished Ambassadors of China and the Russian Federation. We share the concerns expressed over certain recent developments which will have far-reaching implications for the work of this Conference, and indeed for international security, especially as a result of new ideas and doctrines which have been propounded to serve the security interests of countries belonging to a particular military alliance.

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

Over the last few years the Pakistan delegation has repeatedly expressed its serious concerns that the nuclear threat is increasing rather than diminishing in the post-cold-war era. This was because some of the nuclear-weapon States have sought to create new and questionable justifications to retain their nuclear weapons indefinitely. Nuclear deterrence has been propagated against unforeseen threats and even against non-nuclear-weapon States. The threat of other methods of mass destruction has been exaggerated to create further justifications for the possible use of nuclear weapons even against non-nuclear-weapon States, thus in effect negating the security assurances which have been offered by the nuclear-weapon States, including under two resolutions of the Security Council.

Unfortunately, the new strategic concept of a military alliance confirms our apprehensions. This new strategic concept will deal a setback to endeavours to promote disarmament and non-proliferation. It will result in other nuclear-weapon States not belonging to this alliance adopting policies that respond to what they perceive to be their own security interests.

We note in particular that, in reaffirming their willingness to share roles in the strategy of this military alliance, the non-nuclear-weapon States members of this alliance have confirmed that they rely on nuclear weapons as guarantors of their security as much as the nuclear-weapon States themselves. They have also demonstrated their double standards on the issue of nuclear proliferation. We note that some of the strongest denunciations of the nuclear tests which took place in South Asia last year came from these very non-nuclear-weapon States members of this military alliance.

The plans to deploy national missile defences and theatre missile defences and the moves to abrogate or change the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty could lead to serious destabilization of relations between the nuclear-weapon States and produce grave consequences for certain regions, such as South Asia and elsewhere. We trust that this Conference will be enabled to examine these developments in order to take expeditious action to arrest these.

The spokesman of the Pakistan Foreign Office has expressed deep sympathies and condolences on behalf of the people and Government of Pakistan to the people and Government of the People's Republic of China at the loss of lives and damage to the Chinese Embassy during the NATO air strikes on Belgrade. We are anguished by this sad incident. My delegation wishes to convey our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to our Chinese friends. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament would also do so in appropriate terms.

Pakistan has repeatedly emphasized the need for a just and early political solution to the present crisis in Kosovo. Morality must be buttressed by international legality. The United Nations Security Council should play an effective role in the resolution of this crisis in accordance with its responsibilities under the United Nations Charter. This is the best guarantee for the preservation and promotion of international peace and security.

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

The Charter imposes special responsibilities on the permanent members of the Security Council for the preservation of peace and security. Stable and normal relations between them are an essential prerequisite for the maintenance of such international peace and stability.

The bombing of the Chinese Embassy is a grave and regrettable incident. We trust that commensurate amends will be made for the loss of lives and property and the human suffering. This will be essential to overcome the negative effects of the incident. Pakistan enjoys a close, long-standing and all-weather friendship with the People's Republic of China. We cherish this relationship. We also have a tradition of friendship and close cooperation with the United States of America. We trust that this sad incident will not reverse the process of building cooperative relations between these two great Powers on the basis of sovereignty, equality and mutual respect.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and for the kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya, Ambassador Kipkorir Aly Azad Rana.

Mr. RANA (Kenya): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on the enthusiastic manner in which you have assumed the presidency and the diligent manner by which you are carrying out the work of the CD. Be assured that the Kenyan delegation will continue to support you during your presidency. Allow me also to welcome our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of Iraq and Slovakia, to the work of the CD.

It is now well over one month since events took a new turn in the crisis in Kosovo. Prior to this point, the various parties to the conflict engaged in negotiations in Rambouillet, France, which were intended to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

We did consider these talks to be the appropriate way to solve the problem in Kosovo. We kept track of them and hoped that they would be sustained in order to obtain a fruitful outcome. We were therefore very disappointed when a different approach, and a rather violent one for that matter, was adopted. This use of force has indeed led to an escalation of the conflict such that it could represent a formidable threat to international peace and security.

As would be expected in a war situation, it is unfortunately innocent civilians who normally bear the brunt of the fighting. In Kosovo, the whole world has witnessed, and in fact continues to see daily, gruesome images of thousands of children, women and men, old people compelled to flee their homes and seek refuge in overcrowded camps in neighbouring countries.

Even worse has been the rising toll in civilian casualties. Hundreds of civilians have been hit directly or indirectly, and killed in the fighting. More are likely to suffer a similar fate should the military strikes be left to continue unabated. Damage to property has been similarly devastating.

(Mr. Rana, Kenya)

The recent bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in which three of their nationals died demonstrated the danger of continuing this bombardment, which can further escalate the conflict through such accidents.

My delegation would like to express our sincere condolences to the People's Republic of China and all other nationalities who have suffered casualties as a result of this bombing.

Kenya has always advocated a peaceful solution to conflicts. This is the surest way of finding a lasting solution. Solutions based on the use of force are only likely to worsen the situation.

It is out of this firm belief in the peaceful settlement of disputes that the President of the Republic of Kenya, His Excellency Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, has appealed to all the parties involved in the conflict to reconsider their approach and refrain from the use of force, including the possible deployment of ground troops.

I would now like to read out the short press statement that His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya issued on this conflict.

"We have followed the events in Yugoslavia arising out of the crisis in Kosovo with great concern and dismay. The human suffering, loss of life and destruction of property are very worrying.

"I appeal to President Bill Clinton, President of the United States of America, and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, and through them to other leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as to President Boris Yeltsin, President of Russia, and President Slobodan Milošević of Yugoslavia, to find other methods of resolving the conflict in Kosovo, as the current approach does not appear to have had the expected results. It should be clear from the damage done to property and loss of human life that the time has come when peaceful means should be used to try and resolve the problem. Diplomacy and negotiations should be given a chance to address the causes of the crisis. The current conflict runs the risk of threatening the very international system that has maintained peace since World War II. We urge all sides to exercise maximum flexibility.

"It is important for all parties concerned to re-evaluate their approach, effect a cease-fire and turn away from the use of force, including that of using ground troops, which has the potential of escalating the war.

"I have met with the Ambassadors of the United States, Russia, Yugoslavia and the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to convey my appeal to their heads of State and Government."

This statement was issued last month.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Kenya for his statement and for his kind words to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. PETÓCZ (Slovakia): Mr. President, let me first extend to you my delegation's warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I should also like to take this opportunity to greet Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all my distinguished colleagues here in this hall, as well as all the members of the CD secretariat.

Since I reserve the right to deliver a substantive statement at a later stage, I have asked for the floor today in order to express my heartfelt gratitude for the kind words of welcome I have just received in my capacity as the new Ambassador of Slovakia from you, Mr. President, and from my distinguished colleagues, the Ambassadors of the Russian Federation, China, Pakistan and Kenya. May I assure you all of my delegation's continuing support, readiness and cooperation in the fulfilment of our common endeavour?

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Slovakia for his statement and the kind words to the Chair. I give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Ms. KUNADI (India): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency allow me to express the satisfaction of India in seeing you, a representative of a fellow non-aligned country, chairing the Conference on Disarmament at this important juncture. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament since we last spoke in the plenary, that is, the Ambassadors of Indonesia, France, South Africa, Australia, Slovakia, Iraq, Israel, Venezuela, Sweden, Colombia and Argentina. We wish them all success during their stay in Geneva. Our appreciation also to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and the secretariat for all their assistance in facilitating our work.

As we commence the second part of the annual session of the CD, all of us here are all too aware of developments relating to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that we witnessed in the inter-sessional period, including those of last weekend. The Government of India has on several occasions and at the appropriate forum expressed its position on these events.

We would like to join other delegations which have spoken before us in expressing our sympathy and condolences to the delegation of China.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of India for her statement and the kind words to the Chair. I give the floor to the Ambassador of China.

Mr. LI (China) (translated from Chinese): The Chinese delegation sincerely thanks Ambassador Sidorov of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan, Ambassador Kipkorir Aly Azad Rana of Kenya and, now, the Indian Ambassador for the condolences and sympathy expressed for those who died at the Embassy of China to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I would also like to thank the other delegations for their condolences and sympathy expressed to me in various ways and forms. I will transmit their condolences and sympathy to my Government and the families of the victims.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Li for his statement.

As you will recall, we ended the first part of the annual session in March without succeeding in reaching agreement on the programme of work of the Conference. The two issues that prevented agreement on the programme of work relate to appropriate mechanisms for dealing with nuclear disarmament and prevention of an arms race in outer space, despite the intensive consultations held by my predecessors and myself on the various proposals on the table. I intend to continue my consultations in the time remaining to me as President, with a view to developing a consensus which would allow us to start our substantive work as soon as possible.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 20 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.